

What is claimed

1. (currently amended) A vacuum cleaner, comprising:
 - a housing;
 - a nozzle inlet;
 - a suction generator carried on said housing; and
 - a dirt vessel carried on said housing, said dirt vessel including a sidewall, a bottom wall, an air inlet and an air outlet;
 - an exhaust manifold connected to said dirt vessel, said exhaust manifold including a carrying handle;
 - a filter shield aligned with said air inlet to deflect an airstream entering said dirt vessel through said air inlet; and
 - a filter element wherein said exhaust manifold and said filter element are carried on said dirt vessel.
2. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 1, wherein said air inlet is in said bottom wall of said dirt vessel.
3. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 2, wherein an air inlet conduit is provided between said air inlet and said filter shield.
4. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 3, wherein a gap is provided between an open end of said air inlet conduit and said filter shield.
5. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 4, wherein said filter shield is carried by said filter element.

6. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 5, wherein said filter element includes two screens sandwiching a filter material.
7. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 5, wherein said air outlet is formed by an open top of said filter vessel.
8. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 7, wherein said filter element covers said air outlet.
9. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 8, wherein said dirt vessel includes a dirt collection chamber.
10. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 9, wherein said dirt collection chamber is substantially cylindrical in shape.
11. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 10, wherein said air inlet conduit is received concentrically within said sidewall of said dirt vessel.
12. (original) The vacuum cleaner of claim 11, wherein at least a portion of said dirt collection chamber is annular in shape.
13. (canceled)
14. (currently amended) The vacuum cleaner of claim 1~~claim 13~~, wherein said exhaust manifold includes a manifold inlet in fluid communication with said air outlet of said dirt vessel and a discharge outlet in communication with said suction generator.

15. (canceled)

16. (canceled)

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (canceled)

20. (currently amended) The vacuum cleaner of claim 1~~claim 18~~, wherein said housing includes a nozzle section including said nozzle inlet and a canister section wherein said nozzle section and said canister section are pivotally connected together.

21. (canceled)

22. (canceled)